



STAFF NOTES:

Middle East Africa South Asia

Secret

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No. 0652/75

April 8, 1975

Approved For Release 2001/07/30 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000700200002-2
No Foreign Dissem

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Classified by 005827
Exempt from general declassification schedule
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§ 5B (1), (2), and (3)
Automatically declassified
on: Date Impossible to Determine

Approved For Release 2001/07/30 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000700200002-2

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Israel

Extension of UN Force in Sinai Accepted

1 Israel has agreed to accept a limited, three-month extension of the UN emergency force in the Sinai, even though Tel Aviv contends that a time limit is "contrary to the spirit of the disengagement agreement." On March 29 Egyptian President Sadat announced that Egypt would agree to extend the emergency force 2 mandate--which expires on April 24--only until the end of July. The Israeli decision is expected to open the way for a non-contentious UN Security Council meeting--probably around the middle of the month--to 3 approve extending the mandate. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Algeria-France

Giscard Visit

2 French President Giscard d'Estaing's visit to Algiers on April 10-12 will be the first to independent Algeria by a French chief of state. His trip may help dispel some of the legacy of mutual mistrust that has marred bilateral relations in the past. Significantly warmer relations appear unlikely, however, because of several contentious bilateral issues and different perceptions of national interest.

Algerian President Boumediene is likely to seek:

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- Additional loans for and increased French investment in Algeria's ambitious four-year development plan.
 - French support in promoting Algerian trade with the Common Market.
 - Improved working conditions and increased protection for Algerian immigrant workers in France.

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142 -- French support for discussing all raw materials--not just oil--at the conference of oil producers and consumers this summer.

The Algerians may also explore the possibility of additional military purchases to decrease their dependence on the USSR, their primary arms supplier.

2 The psychological after effects of the former colonial relationship and the long and bruising Algerian war for independence have been a basic unsettling factor in relations between Paris and Algiers. Over the past two years, they have also been marred by sporadic racial incidents involving Algerian nationals in southern France. Notwithstanding these problems, Algeria recognizes the need for good relations with its former colonial master. France remains Algiers' primary trading partner, the most likely source of future foreign investment, and an important safety valve for reducing unemployment pressures at home.

142 In connection with the producer-consumer meeting the Algerians will discuss with Giscard their dissatisfaction with the limited agenda and attendance that France has proposed. They may also reflect their annoyance that France issued invitations to the April preparatory meeting in the middle of the OPEC summit conference in Algiers last month. Giscard, for his part, may make some conciliatory gestures on the protection of Algerian workers in his country, an especially sensitive issue for Algiers. Before making any significant concessions, Giscard is likely to press hard for the transfer of blocked French-held bank accounts, further progress on compensation for former French properties that were nationalized since 1965, and implementation of the Franco-Algerian agreement to eliminate double taxation of French firms headquartered in Algiers.

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Malagasy Republic

High-level Arrest Adds to Troubles

13 The arrest late last month of former director general of the government Colonel Roland Rabetafika, in connection with the continuing trial of police rebels and old-line politicians, has added to the political tensions on the Indian Ocean island. No official announcement has been made of Rabetafika's arrest, and no charges against him been revealed. Rabetafika was one of the most powerful figures in the regime of General Ramanantsoa who governed from May 1972 until last January.

3 Rabetafika's name cropped up during the trial in which 296 individuals are accused of plotting against the Ramanantsoa government and involvement in the assassination last February of Colonel Ratsimandrava after he took over as head of government from Ramanantsoa. The accused are virtually all from the majority coastal tribes. They include members of the mobile police, as well as some civilian political figures, such as former President Tsiranana and his vice president Andre Resampa, both of the 2 Malagasy Socialist Party.

1 Several weeks ago Rabetafika was rumored to have been part of the conspiracy against Ratsimandrava, even though Rabetafika is not from one of the coastal tribes. Rabetafika, in fact, is a member of one of the "48 families," the wealthy elite among the Merina or highland tribes. According to one of several rumors about Ratsimandrava's assassination, Rabetafika, acting on behalf of upper class Merina, egged on the coastal assassins of Ratsimandrava. Rabetafika's wealthy faction allegedly believed it essential to thwart Ratsimandrava's plans for local development before they destroyed the socio-economic power of the "48 families." In any event, Rabetafika's arrest has increased apprehension among the Merina.

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It is not yet clear whether Rabetafika is simply being held for investigation or has been charged as a conspirator. It is possible that Madagascar's ruling military directory felt that rumors of Rabetafika's involvement in the conspiracy made his arrest necessary to demonstrate to the coastal population that the government was acting impartially. On the other hand, the military directory may be convinced that Rabetafika is a conspirator, and deserves to be tried.

Colonel Rabetafika's arrests may also be related to the rivalry between the army and the gendarmerie, the country's evenly balanced security organizations. The two organizations have been major factors in the republic since a military government was established in May 1972. Rabetafika, an army officer, and Ratsimandrava, a member of the gendarmerie, were bitter rivals, and the latter's fellow gendarmerie members may have played a role in Rabetafika's arrest. Rabetafika's sympathizers in the army and elsewhere probably resent his arrest, but so far seem unable to act on his behalf.

The country's ruling 18-member military directory, headed by General Gilles Andriamahazo, continues to be concerned about security. It has continued a curfew and a ban on public meetings, and retains strict control over internal and foreign travel instituted after the assassination of Ratsimandrava. These measures appear designed in part to thwart any anti-government moves by sympathizers of those on trial.
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Africa

Future Bleak in Sahel

Six years of drought ended last June in Africa's Sahel--the fringe of barely arable land south of the Sahara Desert on which six desperately poor countries depend for growing livestock and cultivating grain. Even with almost normal rainfall throughout most of the area, domestic harvests and grain supplies carried over from aid donations in 1974 were short of the Sahelian states' cereal requirements for 1975 by some 300,000 to 400,000 tons. Two or three consecutive years of rainfall matching the 1974 total would be required to rebuild drought-baked land in the Sahel and restore cereal output to adequate levels. Recovery of livestock herds would take substantially longer.

The six countries most severely hit by the drought--Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, and Chad--were already among the world's poorest.

Since the fall of 1972, more than 1.2 million tons of grain and other foods have been donated through a multinational aid effort. Despite difficulties in delivering supplies, mass starvation was averted and malnutrition perceptibly reduced.

Six Years of Drought

Rainfall was below average in 1968 and 1969 and then fell in successive years to a low of less than two thirds of normal in 1973. Always susceptible to drought, the Sahelian herding economy suffered the most immediate and severe damage. Wells both for human and animal consumption dried up and pastures were quickly consumed. River flooding, depended on to irrigate the Sahelian grain crops, failed in 1972 and 1973. Cereal production in the six countries may

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have been reduced by as much as one third. Because Sahelian agriculture is largely divorced from the monetary economy, the drought's effect on gross national output in the six Sahelian states did not reflect the severity of the disaster.

The drought may have killed as many as 15 to 25 million head of cattle, a third to a half of the livestock population. The effect will be to cut domestic and foreign cattle trade for a number of years. Cattle sold or bartered by the herdsmen supply live beef to butchers in nearby towns and to traders who send it to coastal cities, such as Abidjan, Dakar, and Accra.

One serious effect of the drought was to quicken the pace at which the desert is encroaching into the Sahel. This had been going on for many years because of overgrazing.

Possibility of Deteriorating Weather

Some weather experts forecast a long-term cyclical cooling trend in world weather patterns. For the Sahel, this would mean eventual disaster; the cooling weather would restrict the northerly movement of the subtropical monsoons that bring the Sahelian rains. The result would ultimately be the southward advance of the Sahara into the Sahelian region.

The encroachment of Sahara-like weather would leave the states unable to feed themselves even in good years. The resulting southward migration of peoples would increase the strife that already occasionally flares between herdsmen seeking pasture and farmers protecting crops. Age-old cultural conflicts would be exacerbated.

Whether a cyclical deterioration has already begun and, if it has, how quickly weather will worsen are still being debated among the experts. The Sahelian governments and major aid donors are acting on the assumption that the climate will not prevent reasonable chances for economic development.

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One consequence of the recent drought was the disruption of conservative economic and cultural mores that probably had been detrimental to the region's potential for development. Suddenly bereft of a viable livelihood, herdsmen were forced to seek wage jobs in southern communities, many outside their countries. This movement could help moderate population pressures on the Sahel's meager resources.

Agricultural development, even with its limited potential, will remain the key to improving the levels of living in the six Sahelian states. The wide range of aid-sponsored projects planned and begun in reaction to the drought will alleviate hardships and help build a framework for growth. Continuing growth will require more infusions of capital and technical aid and far-reaching changes in the attitudes and habits of the governments as well as the farmers and herdsmen.

Cattle raising appears to hold the most promise. Beef markets already exist in the coastal cities, and Sahelian production probably could be increased substantially through integrated programs of cattle weaning, feeding, and marketing. These could be set up without seriously disturbing traditional migratory herding patterns. The threats of recurrent overgrazing and drought would, of course, remain.

The expansion of food-crop irrigation and an increase in the scope and resiliency of livestock feeding are the most pressing needs. The control of crop and livestock pests and diseases will be required. The introduction of cultivating equipment, fertilizers, cattle handling facilities, and improved livestock breeds and crop strains will be required to sustain growth.

Irrigation and Livestock Feeding

A particularly difficult problem will be to overcome the unreliability of food crop irrigation and livestock feeding. Rivers and wells that provide

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precludes their pasturing outside of the better-watered areas in the south.

Institutional Shortcomings

Economic backwardness and policy and administrative shortcomings in the Sahelian states reduce the effectiveness of foreign aid. Aid donors are discouraged by vague and incomplete planning and a lack of detailed project proposals. Poor coordination reduces the impact of existing programs and projects. Limited planning skills and disagreement over strategies and goals impede efforts to alleviate these problems. Some governments have recently begun to give priority to cattle raising as funding has become available from aid donors.

Ironically, the incentives for livestock herding are likely to stimulate a recurrence of overgrazing. The states still seek to increase livestock exports, the herders stand by the tradition of livestock as a store of wealth, and veterinary services are widely available. None of the states is trying to determine an optimum grazing capacity for the Sahel. The incentive for controlling herd sizes provided by the drought will diminish if good rainfall continues during the next few years.

Any effective system for controlling herd numbers would be exceedingly difficult and costly to develop. The institution of private land tenure, which would provide automatic incentives to control herds, would require a generation or more.

Prospects

Recovery to pre-drought living standards will probably take several years in most of the Sahel, barring the recurrence of a severe area-wide drought, which few experts predict in the near future. Localized droughts are sure to come, and intermittent requirements for foreign food donations to individual states

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abundant water during normal years recede drastically when not replenished by the annual rains. Very deep wells, although reliable, are prohibitively expensive. Inadequate water rules out the development of reliable pasture land in the northern Sahel. The growing of hay or other feed crops farther south and the elimination of diseases from pastures south of the Sahel will take time and money.

Financial problems and disagreements among the governments have long impeded the damming of the Sahelian rivers for crop irrigation. Small irrigation projects that could be constructed without massive foreign aid would have doubtful potential. The tapping of rivers with small weirs and canals is inexpensive and beneficial in most years, but probably would not be reliable during long droughts.

Lack of feed for the herds during long droughts will remain a severe problem until the six countries improve their ability to grow and feed in the south. Fencing and rotational grazing, even if politically and technically feasible, could not ensure adequate pasture in the northern Sahel through long and severe droughts.

Most herdsmen will probably continue to prolong their stay in the dry season pasturing areas of the south. If crop irrigation were established along the rivers, growing and stocking hay or other livestock feed probably could be developed to provide some relief. During droughts, competition for land between herdsmen and farmers would likely remain a problem.

There is hope that tsetse fly eradication programs will expand pasturing south of the Sahel; this in turn would raise the prospects for improving livestock breeds. Long subject to extremely high mortality, the Sahelian herds consist of only the hardiest animals able to withstand long periods with little feed and water. More productive breeds would require better feeding conditions, which probably

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will recur. Assistance for nomadic families that lost their entire livestock herds will be needed for several years.

The need to effect fundamental economic changes will severely test the determination and stability of the Sahelian governments. The magnitude and duration of aid that will be required will strain the generosity and patience of donors. Except possibly for medical and dietary assistance, little perceptible improvement is likely soon in the standard of living of most of the rural people in the six states. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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India

Political Headaches for Mrs. Gandhi

2 Two of Prime Minister Gandhi's most uncompromising political foes are taking actions increasingly likely to lead to violence as they continue to press their demands for decentralization of political power. Moraji Desai, a 79-year old former deputy prime minister, and Jayaprakash Narayan, 72, charge Mrs. Gandhi with denying the people their democratic rights and want new elections in their home states as a first step toward the changes they advocate. Both are disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and also disenchanted former members of the ruling Congress Party.

Desai's immediate goal is termination of "president's rule"--direct control from New Delhi--in his home state of Gujarat. Gujarat came under central control in February 1974 after a student revolt, aimed at alleged corruption in government, brought down the Congress Party state government. On April 7, Desai began a "fast unto death" as a means of forcing Mrs. Gandhi to agree to hold new elections in Gujarat before June 1. He rejected her offer of elections shortly after the summer monsoon, and ridiculed the government's argument that at present it is too busy with relief operations in drought-affected portions of the state to hold elections.

243 Most observers doubt that [REDACTED] Desai, who in the past has bolstered his political demands with hunger strikes--will agree to any compromise. His bitterness toward Mrs. Gandhi also reflects earlier defeats in his contests with her for the prime ministership, and his demotion to the political sidelines following the split in the Congress Party in 1969. For her part, Mrs. Gandhi is loathe to agree to an early poll in Gujarat because her party is weak there, and an electoral defeat could seriously undermine its morale throughout the country at a time

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when the party is prepared^{my} for national elections that must be held within the next eleven months. On the other hand, if Desai's fast continues, law and order problems could multiply in Gujarat.

Meanwhile, Narayan is pressing his immediate demand for new elections to replace the present Congress government in his home state of Bihar. In recent weeks, he has stepped up appeals to Indian security forces to resist government orders to use force against participants in his anti-corruption drive. In public statements aimed explicitly at police, paramilitary units and the armed forces, Narayan is claiming that such orders are "immoral" and that the loyalties of the members of these forces belong to the nation rather than to the prime minister. He has even warned that he would not hesitate to call on the armed forces and police to revolt should the appropriate time arrive.

Narayan's appeals to the security services has frightened some of his supporters, and the moderate press has rebuked him for apparently compromising his non-violent, Gandhian philosophy. Pro-government forces, for their part, have exploited Narayan's remarks to support their contention that he is contributing to an atmosphere that encourages violence. The government will certainly be alert for any signs of restiveness among the traditionally loyal, but financially hard-pressed police and paramilitary forces. They are drawn heavily from northern India where harsh economic conditions have helped Narayan gain adherents.

Despite Narayan's increasingly provocative campaign against the government, Mrs. Gandhi appears resigned to letting him continue his attack rather than take the potentially explosive step of arresting him. She may, however, seek an accommodation with Narayan on less contentious issues that he has raised, such as the demand for changes in the electoral and educational systems. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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